

Agenda Item No:	15	
Report To:	Cabinet	
Date of Meeting:	12 th July 2018	
Report Title:	Terms of Reference of the Town Centre Place Making Board	
Report Author & Job Title:	Richard Alderton	
Portfolio Holder:	Leader of the Council, Cllr. Gerry Clarkson	

Summary: Membership of this Board has been agreed by Cabinet following a recommendation from Selection and Constitutional Review Committee. This report proposes Terms of Reference for the Board prior to its first meeting.

Key Decision:	NO
Significantly Affected Wards:	Borough-wide interest
Recommendations:	The Cabinet is recommended to agree the Terms of Reference for The Town Centre Place Making Board as set out in the appendix to this report.
Policy Overview:	This Board has a key role to play delivering the Council's corporate agenda in terms of helping drive the Borough's economy; the quality of life for residents; and supporting the Council's finances to provide value for residents.
Financial Implications:	None in terms of this decision.
Legal Implications	None in terms of this decision.
Equalities Impact Assessment	Not required in terms of this decision.

Terms of Reference of the Town Centre Place Making Board

Background

The purpose of the report is to seek Cabinet approval for the Terms of Reference of this Board.

In line with the Articles of the Constitution – Part 2, para 7.11 - the Cabinet is required to approve the Terms of Reference of this Board. The proposed Terms of Reference are attached as an Appendix to this report.

Proposal/Current Position

A Town Centre Place Making Board is proposed to drive a strong and positive response to the various challenges that all town centres are currently facing. This is a high priority for the Council.

The Board aims to capitalising on the many changes underway in the town to create a stronger destination that Borough residents and visitors alike will enjoy.

As a first step, there is a need to better understand what people want from their town centre in a fast changing world. Then the response will focus on speedy action – be it delivering improvements to the environment so it is easier to use and enjoy the town centre; or broadening the quality of the experiences on offer to appeal to all sections of the community.

The Council will need to work with residents, businesses and many others who have a stake in the town to find a compelling mix of retail, business and community services, leisure and entertainment experiences. The intention is to create a co-ordinated action plan which will deliver a range of projects. The Board's minutes; the action plan that is prepared; and any financial approvals needed will be reported to the Cabinet for decision.

It is now timely – given the priority focus on regenerating the town centre – to have a specific Board focusing on town centre place-making.

The town centre work is being handled in four work-streams with a lead councillor in each. The Board's membership reflects this and also includes lead members for finance and legal issues.



Portfolio Holder's Views

“This Ashford Town Centre Place Making Board has one of the most important tasks ahead of it and its Organisation and now its Terms of Reference, are therefore extremely important. These Terms of Reference are well defined and, whilst written in an engaging way, direct a sharp focus on delivering a very special place for the people of Ashford and with which I hope that we too can all be proud.

I commend this report and its single recommendation”.

Contact and Email

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Ashford Town Centre Place Making Board

Draft Terms of Reference

1. The Board's role is to help set an ambitious future for Ashford town centre. This will be based on a clear understanding of the way town centres are changing and the ingredients that will make Ashford town centre a special place with a great range of experiences to enjoy and a quality environment to enjoy them in. The ambition is to consolidate Ashford town centre as the vibrant, exciting and economically buoyant heart of our community.
2. Ashford town centre – in line with town centres generally – is changing rapidly as people's shopping habits and expectations change. But, unlike most other centres, Ashford is currently seeing large-scale investment in a range of leisure, employment and tourism projects and the Board's vision needs to capitalise on this opportunity map a clear and exciting direction for the town centre's future.
3. The Board will set a challenging and ambitious set of specific outcomes to achieve. These will be fleshed out in practical project delivery plans with the resources needed to deliver them.
4. The agenda of projects will be wide ranging and vary in scale – getting the detail right is as important as delivering major capital projects. A special focus is needed on the range of experiences and 'things to do' in the town centre to respond to the fact that peoples' expectations of town centres have changed.
5. This agenda must be tackled at pace to take full advantage of the current opportunities and the market momentum and enthusiasm that has built up around the town's future prospects. Working groups tackling key themes have been set up to inject this momentum – the Board will oversee this work and agree an action plan for subsequent formal consideration by the Cabinet.
6. Specialist financial and legal support the Board needs will be provided by relevant officers and their respective portfolio holders being fully involved as Board members.
7. The minutes of the Board will be reported to Cabinet. Decisions requiring financial approval outside existing approved budgets will continue to be taken by Cabinet in the normal way.
8. It is important that all councillors are able to contribute their ideas to the Board's work. This will be achieved in a number of ways including member briefings, workshops and written progress updates.
9. Understanding the needs of different user groups in the town centre will be crucial to help shape the Board's project delivery plans and make sure they are relevant. The Board will draw on research from the Residents' Opinion Survey; focus groups with key target audiences; and a town centre stakeholder event.

10. The Board will want to engage with the wider Borough community both to seek their views and ideas but also to explain and build awareness of what is happening now and in future in the town centre. The Board will approve a Communications Plan to tackle this requirement and keep it under review as the work develops. Major individual projects may need their own Communications Plans.

11. Working with partners in the private, public, community and voluntary sectors is crucial. This will help to generate commitment, enthusiasm and confidence. Crucially it will also help to identify shared opportunities and show how resources from different sources can be matched to help deliver the Board's ambitious agenda

12. The Board will direct the collective efforts of the four work stream groups and receive reports from them, in order to co-ordinate our approach and drive forward and deliver that special place we all seek to create. The Board will oversee the preparation and implementation of an action plan for the town centre and work with strategic partners (e.g. at the Ashford Strategic Delivery Board and the Health and Well-being Board) to help deliver that plan.